

Geology is Gold

The spectacular cliffs along Gold Bluffs Beach to the east preserve floodplain and gravel bars once part of an ancestral river. The river eroded gold deposits and rock that were carried downstream to the ocean. Along the way, the gold mixed with floodplain and channel sediments. These stream deposits were uplifted and preserved in the bluffs seen today.

In the 1850s, prospectors devised a way to mine the gold using water flumes and copper amalgamators. During low winter tides, crews shoveled sand into canvas buckets slung over the backs of mules. The mules carried the loads up the hill to “sand corrals.” Fall and winter rains washed the granules down the long flumes, ridding the sand of dirt and silt. At the wash house, prospectors extracted gold using mercury-covered copper plates.



Crews at Union Gold Bluffs Mining Company successfully mined here for almost thirty years; photo about 1900.